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ABSTRACT

One of the greatest challenges of music analysis, and especially its pedagogy, is the issue of unification: the integration of detailed and sometimes disparate analytical observations within a more global explanatory context. Music theory has traditionally addressed this issue from the perspective of syntax (the most familiar approaches being those of Schenker and Set-theory), but an approach to unification can also be undertaken from a more rhetorical perspective (as implied in Schoenberg's writings), attempting to capture the abstract essence of a work's cohesive individuality--its basic "idea"--in both analysis and explanation. This paper suggests that, when viewed in light of contemporary analytical approaches, the potential of "idea" as both an analytic and pedagogical tool has been greatly underestimated. It investigates the implications of more fully utilizing "idea" in music analysis by examining its practical application as a type of explanatory glue, which can be used to unify conflicting analytic observations. It first traces the various facets and development of Schoenberg's own notion of musical idea. It then develops and categorizes three different types of idea (absolute, metaphoric, and amalgamative), illustrating with examples, ways in which each can be utilized to embrace varying analytic details in particular musical works so as to effect the merger of the rhetorical and syntactic elements of musical explanation. Finally, it suggests a pedagogical procedure through which the discovery of binders might be obtained, providing a means by which discrete parts can once again be made whole and the resulting analyses suitably enhanced for the developing listener. (Author)

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ED306165

Essence and Explanation:
Idea as a Pedagogical Tool in the Analysis Class

Paper presented for the 31st Annual Meeting
The College Music Society

October 14, 1988
Santa Fe, NM

SO 019 838

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Man is petty. We do not believe enough in the whole thing, in the great thing, but demand irrefutable details. We depend too little upon that capacity which gives us an impression of the object as a totality containing within itself all details in their corresponding relationships. [...]

The more exactly we observe, the more enigmatic does the simplest matter become to us. We analyse because we are not satisfied with comprehending nature, effect and function of a totality as a totality and, when we are not able to put together again exactly what we have taken apart, we begin to do injustice to that capacity which gave us the whole together with its spirit, and we lost faith in our finest ability — the ability to receive a total impression.

— Arnold Schoenberg
from "Gustav Mahler" in Style and Idea
(p. 449)

ABSTRACT

One of the greatest challenges of music analysis, and especially its pedagogy, is the issue of unification: the ultimate integration of detailed and sometimes disparate analytical observations within a more global explanatory context. Music theory has traditionally addressed this issue from the perspective of syntax (the most familiar approaches being those of Schenker and Set-theory), but an approach to unification can also be undertaken from a more rhetorical perspective (as implied in Schoenberg's writings), attempting to capture the abstract essence of a work's cohesive individuality — its basic "idea" — in both analysis and explanation. This paper suggests that, when viewed in light of contemporary analytical approaches, the potential of "idea" as both an analytic and pedagogical tool has been greatly underestimated.

The body of the paper investigates the implications of more fully utilizing Idea in music analysis by examining its practical application as a type of explanatory glue, which can be used to unify conflicting analytic observations. It first traces the various facets and development of Schoenberg's own notion of musical idea. It then develops and categorizes three different types of idea (absolute, metaphoric, and amalgamative), and illustrates with examples ways in which each can be utilized to embrace varying analytic details in particular musical works so as to effect the merger of the rhetorical and syntactic elements of musical explanation. Finally, it suggests a pedagogical procedure through which the discovery of binders might be obtained, providing a means by which discrete parts can once again be made whole and the resulting analyses suitably enhanced for the developing listener.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIVE SLIDES

1. [Blank]

2. Title slide for Chopin, Prelude #9 in E Major, Opus 28
3. Upper voice foreground
4. Background tonal motion
5. Form

6. [Blank]

7. Title slide for Beethoven, Minuet and Trio, Opus 10 #3
8. Opening period
9. D -vs- E in codetta and at climax
10. Retention of E -vs- D in digressions

11. [Blank]

12. Title slide for Schumann, Dichterliebe #12, "Am leuchtenden Summermorgen"
13. Background tonal contrasts
14. Relationships of secondary keys
15. Return to silence

16. [Blank]

17. Title slide for Wolf, Italienisches Liederbuch #7, "Der mond hat eine schwere klag' erhoben"
18. Background tonal progression
19. Background arpeggiation
20. Registral activity

21. [Blank]

22. Title slide for Stravinsky, Three Songs from William Shakespeare #1, "Musick to Heare"
23. Juxtaposed serial line and C major fragment in introduction
24. Return of juxtaposition at song's end
25. B - C derivation
26. B -> C lines (1)
27. B -> C lines (2)

28. [Blank]

In the opening paragraphs of his essay on Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schoenberg wrote: "Man is petty. We do not believe enough in the whole thing, [...] but demand irrefutable details. We depend too little upon that capacity which gives us an impression of the object as a totality containing within itself all details in their corresponding relationships." [pause] One of the greatest challenges of music analysis, and especially the teaching of music analysis, _is_ that of unification: the ultimate integration of detailed and sometimes conflicting analytical observations within a more global explanatory context. Music theory has traditionally addressed this issue from the perspective of syntax, the most familiar contemporary approaches being those of Schenker and Set-theory. The realm of syntax, however, is only one in which the cohesiveness of musical structure can be shown to be manifest. An approach to unification can also be undertaken from a more rhetorical perspective, as implied in many of Schoenberg's writings, attempting to capture the essence of a work's cohesive individuality—its basic "idea"--in analysis and explanation. The purpose of this paper is to re-examine the Schoenbergian concept of _idea_ in light of contemporary research, to demonstrate its potential as an analytic tool, and to propose a pedagogical procedure by which its discovery and development may be fostered.

* * * * *

By their very nature, ideas are elusive, and _Idea_ itself is no exception. Like many before him, Schoenberg addressed the question long before he was able to clarify his personal response -- formally tackling the

problem in 1925 and finally addressing the issue publically in 1946 (a full 21 years later!). He began by accumulating notes for an incomplete work later to be known as the Gedanke Manuscript, whose purpose and task was "to find the rules of form which govern musical works by raising the question of coherence". It was not until four years later that he had focused enough to realize that the issue was one of idea -- stating then that "the question as to what a musical idea is has never been answered up till now — if, indeed, it has ever been asked." Yet, at the same time in marginalia he acknowledged that "I thought that I'd be able to state this clearly today... but I must still wait." Apparently abandoned for the moment, it simmered. Eleven years later, in 1940, Schoenberg returned to his original manuscript, noting then that "I have dealt with all these questions much better later on." Finally, six years hence, his conceptualization had grown to the point where he felt comfortable enough to address the issue publically, and did so succinctly in the well-known essay "New Music, Outmoded Music, Style, and Idea", published in 1946: "I myself consider the totality of a piece the idea which its creator wanted to present". Unfortunately, although it was at last clear to Schoenberg, his discussion left much up to the reader who demands detail. His inference must therefore be construed not just from the history of its conceptual development but from more philosophical explorations as well.

To glean further insight into Schoenberg's notion of IDEA, it is helpful to examine his conceptualization of music and the compositional process. To him, a work of art was the unification of crafted thought with creative inspiration, and according to a model discussed by Alexander Goehr, its creational process was fourfold. The "idea" functioned as the conceptual seed from which the piece grew, the "gestalt" was the musical seed which drove the piece, "grundgestalt" was a specific manifestation of the musical seed, and "developing variation" was the process by which the grundgestalt became

the piece. Schoenberg used two principal German nouns to reflect the stages expressed therein: "Gedanke" referring to the Grundgestalt and plan of Developing Variation, (the craft) and "Einfall" referring to the inspirational Idea and the act of taking it into the realm of the mind as Gestalt (the creative genius).

The essence of Idea for Schoenberg thus lay outside the realm of specific musical events, being the conceptual seed of a musical creation and the more abstract nature which holds it together as a coherently functioning totality.

I would like to suggest that music analysis, like Schoenberg's compositional model, too, involves the unification of four roughly analogous stages: premise, process, procedure, and production, although its pedagogical domain most frequently addresses the four stages in retrograded order. Unfortunately at times, the full cycle is aborted and commonly identified problems arise. We focus so much on the content, specificity, and derivation of the procedures, or argue the merits of broadly based metaphorical descriptions of process, that we occasionally run out of time or inclination to reflect on the underlying premise that ties together the production of the piece. It is especially necessary, then, specifically to develop this final integrative stage of coherent totality so that our resulting analyses realize their full musical and intellectual potential. This is where the essence of the piece -- the "Idea" -- emerges, functioning as the explanatory glue with which frequently disparate and sometimes conflicting analytic observations may be unified.

Three basic categories of idea seem especially useful for analytical glue-sniffing: the absolute (which attempts to capture a work's essence through particular syntactic or motivic gestures), the metaphorical (which

attempts to describe a work's essence in a more analogical language), and the amalgamative (which combines aspects of both the absolute and metaphoric types of idea). Each can be best demonstrated in some familiar musical examples.

begin slides [slide 1 (blank)]

* * * * *

[slide 2] The Chopin E major prelude Op. 28, No.9, [also found on your handout, p.1] is fertile ground for exemplification of the absolute idea, since many of its harmonic, voice-leading, and formal gestures can be embraced by the concept of "exploring the different ways of proceeding from <u>five</u> to <u>one</u>", an idea whose significance is underscored in the prelude's doubly interrupted harmonic motion. Certainly many differing paths can be observed. [slide 3] The step progression of the upper voice foreground, for example, states three different combinations of ascending and descending lines between scale degrees 5 and 1 until E's entire chromatic upper tetrachord is variously exhausted. [slide 4] The Prelude's background tonal motion, on the other hand, fills in its I-V space with two prominent 3rd-related keys $G^{\#}$ and G, both linearly approached by allusions to the key of the Neapolitan. At the middleground level, each of the three phrases within which the aforementioned activity takes place is bounded by tonic and dominant chords respectively: their subsequent concatenation demonstrating an immediate and direct path from five to one in contrast with the more circuitous paths already observed. [slide 5] Even form is influenced, since the binary structure of m.1-4; m.5-12, (which is texturally marked at the prelude's surface by trills in m.4's low register) effectively articulates a juxtaposition of diatonic with chromatic as territorial contexts to be traversed during the piece's overall journey through its idealogical texture. [slide 6 (blank)] The applicability

and actual benefit of idea under these conditions is clear: although initial observations appear to be contradictory, (would the tonal background structure, for example, be E-G-E or E-G$^{\#}$-E), the idea provides an explanatory essence which highlights not their obvious contradictions but rather their underlying conceptual thread, and thus it provides effective mediation for their ostensibly irreconcilable differences.

The notion of <u>idea</u> can not only unify such initially disparate analytical observations, but can also help to provide explanation for those puzzling anomalies which always crop up during the course of an analysis. [slide 7] In the Minuet and Trio from the Beethoven Piano Sonata Op.10, No.3, for example, a more exacting "absolute" idea — that of "a conflict and resolution between D and E" — binds many of the work's specific enigmatic details. [slide 8] It helps to capture an explanation for the apparently anomalous return to the supertonic within the interrupted harmonic motion of the opening period, where antecedent and consequent phrases begin on D and E respectively. [slide 9] It extends to the peculiar and exclusive choice of the second inversion of the dominant 7th in the codetta, which summarizes the D/E conflict in its bass line even as it is in the process of prolonging the tonic within the settling harmonic rhythm of the movement's final measures. The idea even helps to explain the specific choice of the <u>French</u> version of the augmented 6th occurring at the climax of the Minuet, as it is the only common version of that chord which contains both pitches D and E within the G-sharp/B-flat chromatic intensification of the Schenkerian structural dominant. [slide 10] At deeper structural levels, the conflict helps to explain the somewhat puzzling retention of the B-E-A-D chord progression (first heard in the Minuet's digression) within the context of the Trio's transitional passages, despite the background change in tonal center from D to G. Tonicizing G's vi and V by means of the identical descending fifths sequence,

sustains the conflict between E and D within the trio's deeper tonal move to the plagal key, preparing the way for the return of the conflict at the foreground in the Minuet. [slide 11 (blank)] Thus, the absolute idea here not only provides explanation for the Minuet's anomalies, but also provides a way to integrate the various levels of musical structure within a less restrictive framework than the replicative requirements of levelled approaches such as those of Reti and Schenker; yet, it complements them very nicely.

In contrast with the absolute idea, a metaphorical idea attempts to capture a work's essence in language alone, without specifying a particular musical content in its expression. Although it is not exclusively applicable to texted music, the metaphorical idea is tempting to use in such pieces because of its interpretive potential as a sort of "structural" text-setting, which inculcates its significance throughout the piece's musical events. [slide 12] For example, in "Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen", the twelfth song of the Schumann Dichterliebe cycle, the "contrast between the silence of the poet and the personification of the flowers" can be seen to underlie and direct the song's tonal structure. [slide 13] Here, personification signals tonal digression: initially, to the brief and not totally established key of the Neapolitan in the first verse's brief and not totally established indirect quotation, and subsequently contrasted with a true tonicization of the relative minor at the point in the second verse where the flowers actually speak. [slide 14] By directing specific attention to those particular textual events, the underlying metaphorical idea helps to emphasize the subtle key relationships between their musical manifestations, (the first key, C-flat, foreshadowing the modally altered third, B, of the second) thus highlighting the similarities between the allusion of minor and the actuality of major while subsuming both digressions within their larger tonal and

textual framework. [slide 15] The final reinforcement of the contrast between personification and silence is emphasized by the positioning of the structural dominant at the end of the text's quotation, followed by a lengthy piano postlude which, in an unsung verse, resolves the piece's other syntactic elements, returning the song to its primary tonality and its focus once again on the silence of the poet. [slide 16 (blank)] Even as non-specific as the metaphorical idea initially seems to be, the contrast between speech and silence can most definitely be seen to underlie the song's more specific tonal, textural, and textual manifestations.

[slide 17] Hugo Wolf's "Der Mond hat eine schwere Klag erhoben" exemplifies an even more pervasive and specific metaphorical idea, conceptually unifying the song as being about "the search for the missing". Its text refers to two missing stars, but in the song, the missing is far more ubiquitous. [slide 18] Initially, for example, the tonal move from E-flat minor through g-flat minor to G-flat major begun in m.9 seems apparently straightforward; that is, until the very last chord of the song, when the two tonal centers are revealed to have been red herrings, and the true tonic of C-flat major emerges (a tonal center made all the more attractive by its conspicuous <u>absence</u> throughout the remainder of the piece). [slide 19] Thus, instead of a more usual minor-relative major unfolding, the background instead becomes a iii-V-I arpeggiation -- a tonal gesture initiated as the search was, so to speak, "already in progress". Although C-flat had always been an inherent possibility in the initiating sonority of the song (its E-flat/G-flat thirds lacking their harmonically defining fifth), the roundabout nature of the search for its missing fifth, (at first supplied by the dyad's upper fifth B-flat, but ultimately furnished by the lower C-flat instead), intensifies the underlying metaphorical idea in a way that mirrors the extensive search of the text and structural line as well.

[slide 20] The song's registral activity also becomes embroiled in the hunt. At first what seems like a coloristic octave drop at the close of the initial voice phrase in m.2, eventually finds itself as the true obligatory register of tonal resolution at the song's close, where m.16's leading tone ultimately resolves to the final covered C^{b} provided by the piano. As an aside, the poor singer never does find ultimate resolution in this work, ending instead on that very leading tone ... quite the delusion of the tonally driven heart, and most certainly exemplifying the ultimate structural setting of the metaphorical missing as well. [slide 21 (blank)] Indeed, the underlying idea in "der Mond" helps to unify and explain many of the song's specific musical events: the search for the stars is finally resolved in the work's last measure, not only by the text, but also by the suprising tonic and newly discovered obligatory register -- two missing elements, musically "found".

When occuring in analytic and musical discussion, both the metaphorical and the absolute ideas <u>can be</u> and <u>frequently are</u> mutually exclusive, since explanatory discourse strives to unify observations within a single conceptual resource. There are circumstances, though, when the two types of rhetorical binders "become one" in themselves, necessitating the creation of a third category; namely, the amalgamative idea. [slide 22] Amalgamation is aptly demonstrated in the first of the "Three Songs from William Shakespeare" by Stravinsky, where the final couplet of text, "Thou single wilt prove none" (a metaphorical idea) is manifested through the juxtaposition and infusion of a serial motive and its polar C-Major scale fragment, as realized through their representative pitch surrogates B and C (an absolute idea). Such amalgamations not only underlie broad-scale gestures

of form, texture, and structure, but also serve as a specific means through which to explain the apparent surface anomalies of the work's serial procedure.

[slide 23] Metaphorically, "thou single wilt prove none" is overtly manifested in the pervasiveness of a duet texture in the song, first shown in the introduction, which juxtaposes a 4-note serial motive in the flute line against a C major scale fragment split between the clarinet and viola in a type of klangfarbenaccompaniment. [slide 24] Even though the serial element seems to win out during the course of the song, the juxtaposition returns when the final couplet of text restates and underlines the premise of the initial metaphorical idea: "Whose speechless song being many seeming one, sings this for thee, Thou single wilt prove none." The metaphorical idea also helps to explain a gross serial anomaly at this point, since underscoring the words THOU SINGLE is an inexplicable omission of all but the framing pitches of the row -- order numbers 1 and 4 ... obviously, a strong compositional if subtle aural indication of the importance of the underlying metaphorical idea at its verbal realization in the text. Slightly altered from Shakespeare's original wording, this final phrase extends the idea still further by addressing the role of the listener. As Shakespeare's text reads "sings this to thee", and Stravinsky's reads "sings this for thee", it extends a gentle invitation to become more actively involved "with" the musical experience, and with the part (not parts, as in Shakespeare) that thou shouldst bear in gleaning and subsequently examining the metaphorical idea and its manifestations throughout a composition which not only sets, but truly exemplifies its text.

[slide 25] Yet, the metaphorical unifier is only half the amalgamative equation, as the serial and tonal aspects of the song are manifest within an absolute idea as well, the juxtaposition and resolution of the pitch-classes B and C, respectively functioning as each elements'

surrogate representative: B from the B/G/A/B^{b} "row", and C from the C/D/E/F/G fragment. [slide 26] Clearest in the flute line of the introduction, for example, the first 4-measure phrase begins and ends on the pitch B, which ultimately resolves to C in m.8 as the concluding pitch-class of the introduction, with a smaller scale B–C motion present in the opening subphrase of the flute line, m.1–2. [slide 27] The voice line rearticulates this B–C juxtaposition, beginning on B, resolving to C at the first sectional division, and ultimately resolving to C at the end of the piece, in the largest scale B–C gesture of them all. Even the song's large-scale tonal framework is involved: structural cadences end on characteristic Stravinskian open 5ths built on C, C, B, G, and C, respectively. Here, the B- and G-focused internal cadences are reminiscent of the opening notes of the serial motive, reflecting the body of the work's preoccupation with the serial manipulations of the B-initiated "row", while the opening emphasis and ultimate re-emergence of the C-focused cadential 5ths further reflects the serial/tonal juxtapositional premise in the song.

[slide 28 (blank—end of show)] The fusion of the absolute B–C juxtaposition with the metaphorical "thou single wilt prove none" is necessitated perhaps by the very rhetorical amalgamative idea which drives the piece in the first place: after all, a <u>single</u> type of IDEA <u>would</u> prove none, and thus would not truly exemplify the essence of Shakespeare as filtered through Stravinsky. The total amalgamation of absolute and metaphorical, so mutually fused as to be interpenetrating in each others's domain, accurately represents the underlying idea at its more philosophical and conceptual level of thought and perception.

[end of slides]

* * * * *

It is easy to imagine other applications of Idea in favorite musical works and teaching pieces: its benefit as a unifying resource in analytic explanation is apparent. Nevertheless, in pedagogical contexts, it can go only so far if the instructor is the exclusive participant in the process. How, then, can students learn also to discover "ideas" for their own work?

Initially, "idea" must be shown to be inherent in the nature of analytical thought. An excellent entry is the traditional dialectic of form and analysis; where form connotes some type of large-scale structure and analysis the more surface aspects which contradict or substantiate it. Together, the two are embraced by the binding theory or "idea", connoting a type of musical synthesis that completes the model and which allows the piece to become more than the sum of its parts. Once the notion that such integration is essential to dialectic thought is understood, it becomes easier to nurture in students the desire and the necessity to reassemble a piece once its whole and parts have been examined. Then, the more practical procedure by which idea may be obtained can be tackled.

Fortunately, the relationship which obtains between Goehr's model of Schoenberg's compositional thought and our own inversely related model of music analysis, suggests its potential in pedagogical adaptation — a four stage procedure comprised of compilation, organization, analysis, and synthesis, through which the discovery and development of idea can be taught. The opening two stages, compilation and organization, are relatively craft-oriented, addressing basic questions of "What?" and "How?" which lay the necessary syntactical groundwork for further consideration. At this point, exceptions, anomalies, and places of unusual intensity are noted, so that subsequent explanations can be proposed and verified. The closing two stages, analysis and synthesis, formulate and crystallize the more inspiration-

oriented "idea-finding" process by raising more rhetorical "Why?"-questions which follow the "What" and "How" of syntax. The disparity among enigmatic details and the ambiguity of their potential interrelations in the opening two stages provide the messy context necessary for an instructor to develop unification in the final ones — by encouraging explanations which endeavor to deal with conflicts not by choice, but by compromise, discovering common threads that can ultimately yield global gestalt, whether absolute, metaphorical, or amalgamative.

The pedagogical methodology, then, combined with the comprehension of the analytical dialectic, provides a structural framework by which syntactic and rhetorical knowledge may be merged, the disparate parts made whole, and the resultant explanation unified and enhanced. By learning to discover underlying congruencies, instead of prematurely rejecting viable observation in favor of premeditated choice, the musician-in-training can be encouraged to become more creative intellectually and more thoughtful musically.

* * * * *

Perhaps we and they "shall deal with all these questions much better later on", but just as with Schoenberg, it is important to be conscious enough of idea to at least ASK now -- not only to determine what Schoenberg himself might have meant, but also to investigate how his concept can be put to good use. IDEA is thus not merely an elusive abstract phenomenon for Schoenberg's music, it can be concrete reality as a viable explanatory tool involved in all musical examination. In its realization as analytical and rhetorical glue, IDEA both develops and exemplifies Schoenberg's two favored words for the concept. It integrates "Gedanke" with Einfall", "thought" with "inspiration", and subtly enhances the teaching of music and analytic thought by revealing

that deeper structural balance of observation and understanding which remains one of Music Theory's lofty goals.

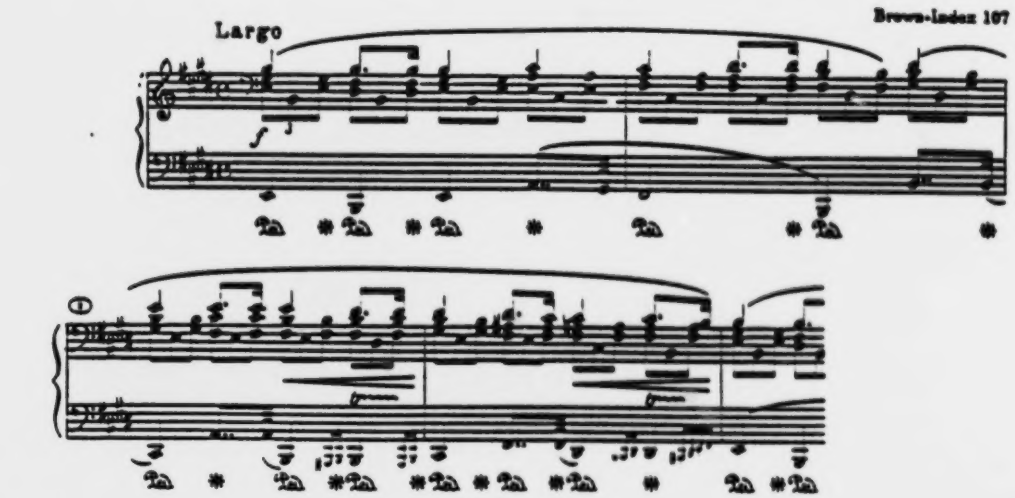
ESSENCE AND EXPLANATION:

Idea as a Pedagogical Tool in the Analysis Class

Claire L. Boge
Miami University

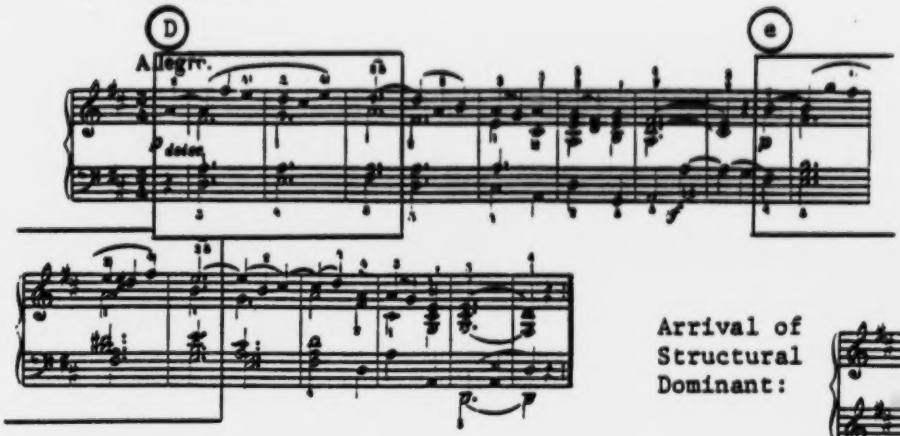
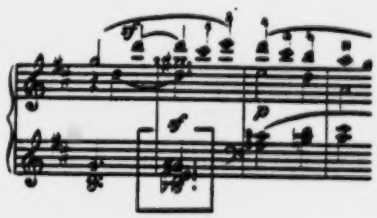
31st Annual Meeting
The College Music Society

October 14, 1988
Santa Fe, NM

Example 1: Chopin, Prelude in E Major (Op.28, #9)

Upper voice foreground:

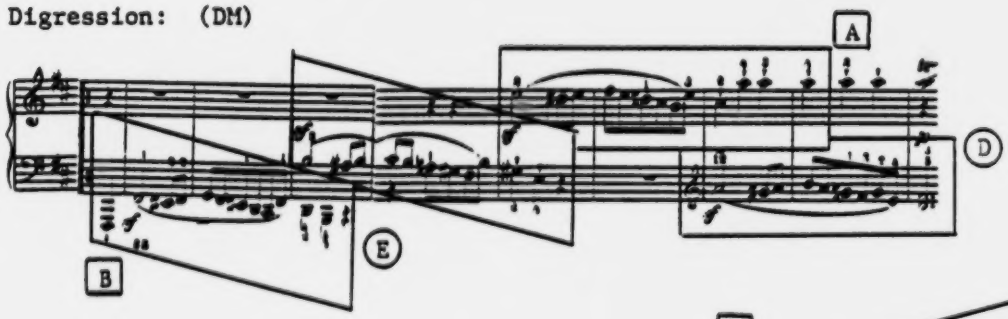
Background tonal motion:

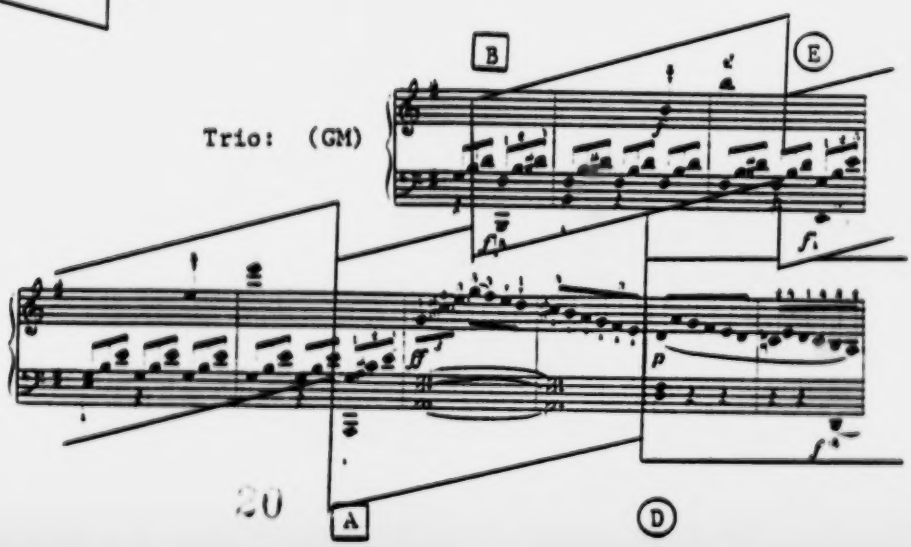
Example 2: Beethoven, Minuet and Trio (Op.10, No.3, III)

Opening period:

Arrival of Structural Dominant:

Fr.6

Codetta:

D: I V_3^4 I V_3^4 I V_3^4 I

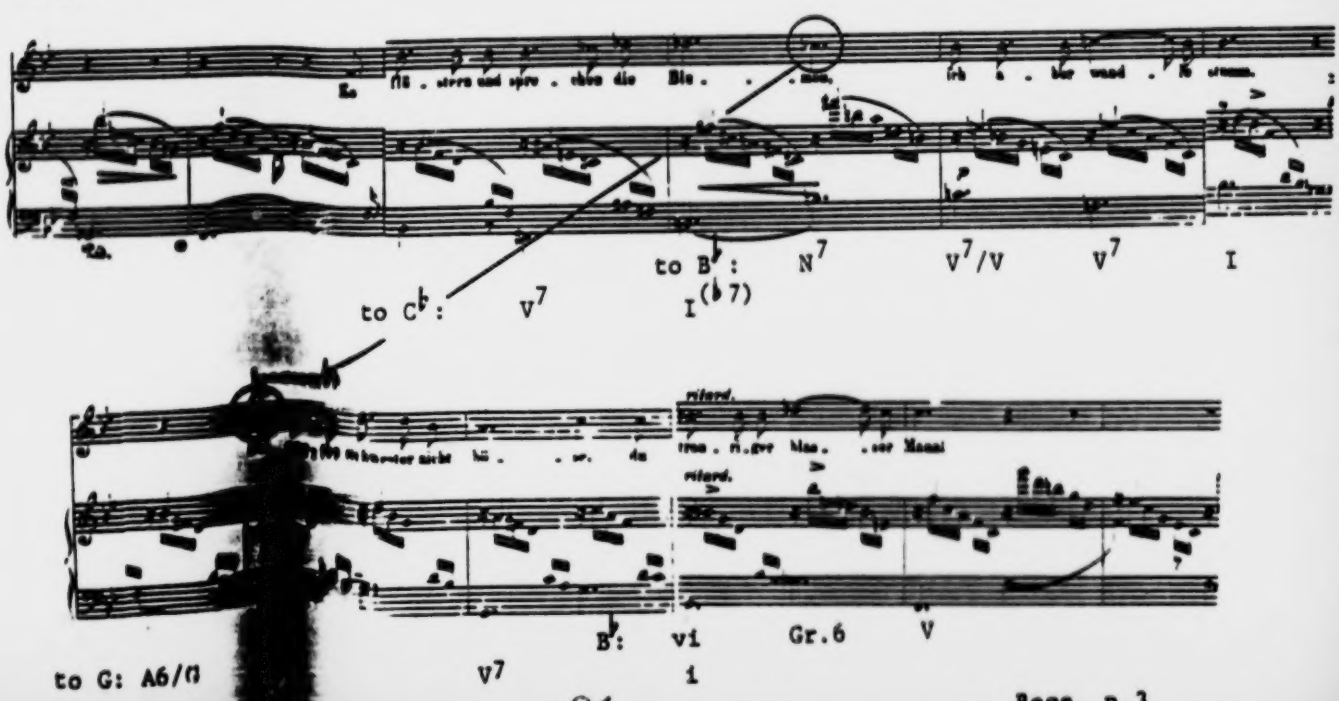
Digression: (DM)

Trio: (GM)



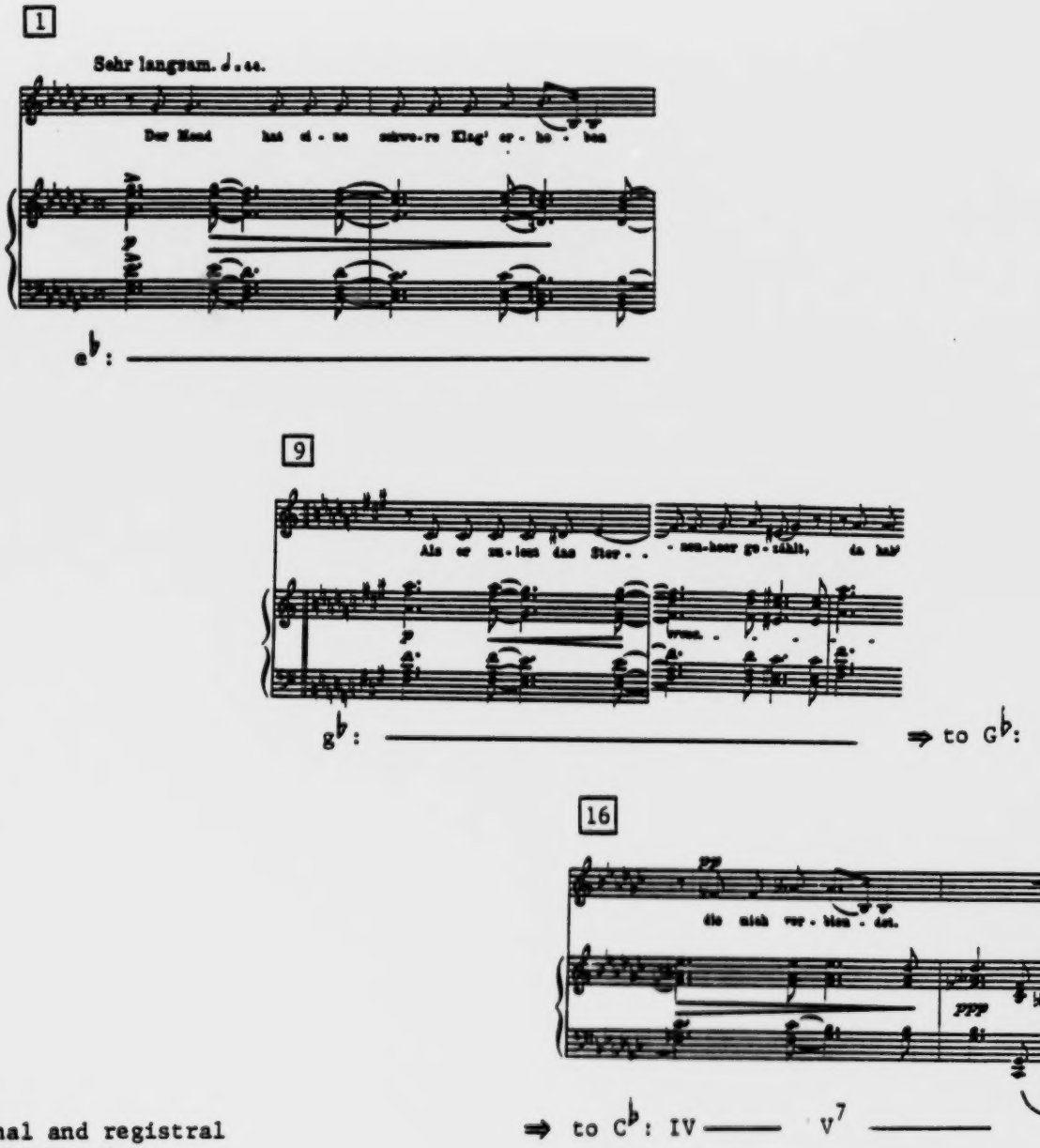
Example 3: Schumann, "Am leuchtenden Sommermorgan" (Dichterliebe, No.12)

I.	Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen	In the bright summer morning
	Geh' ich im Garten herum.	I walk about the garden.
	[Es flüstern und sprechen die Blumen.	The flowers are whispering and talking,
	[Ich aber wandle stumm.	but I wander in silence.]
	Es flüstern und sprechen die Blumen	The flowers are whispering and talking,
II.	Und schau'n mitleidig mich an:	and they look pityingly at me:
	[Sei unserer Schwester nicht böse,	"Don't be angry with our sister,
	[Du trauriger blasser Mann!	you doleful, pale man."]

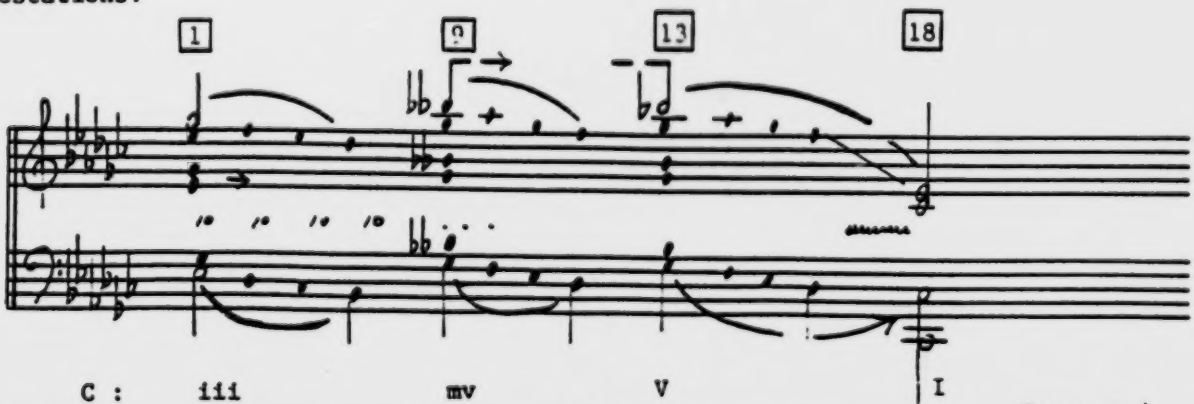
Background tonal contrasts:



Example 4: Wolf: "Der Mond hat eine schwere Klag' erhoben" (Italienisches Liederbuch, VII)

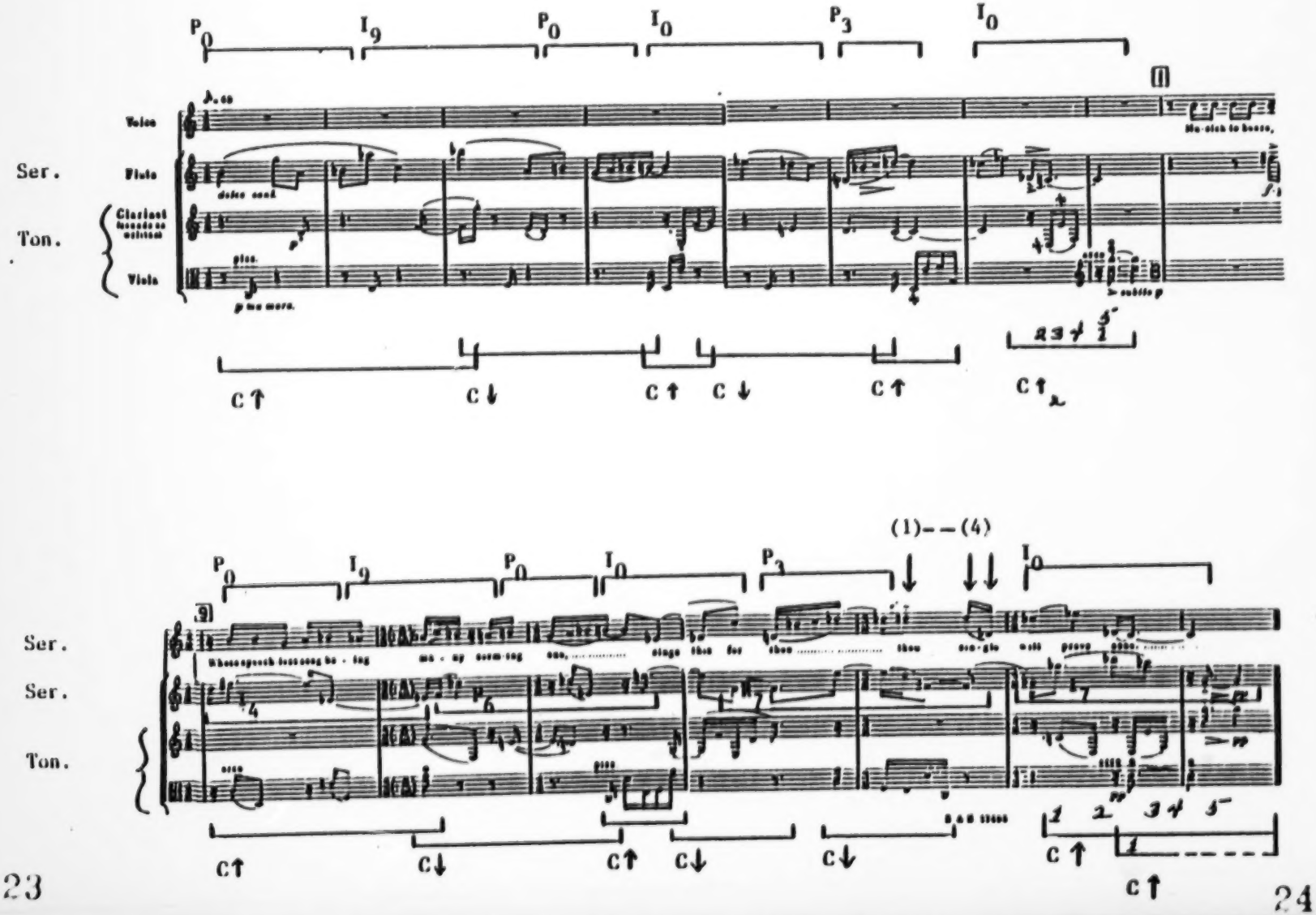

1
Sehr langsam.
Der Mond hat e - ne schwe - re Klag' er - ho - ben
e♭:
9
Als er mein - lem Lieb - chen Stor - - - nen - haar ge - zählt,
g♭:
⇒ to G♭:
16
die mich ver - blen - det.
ppp
⇒ to C♭: IV — V7 — I

Tonal and registral manifestations:



Boge, p.4

Example 5: Stravinsky, "Musick to Heare" (Three Songs from William Shakespeare, I)



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Boge, p.5